UNITED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/2093
4 March 1996

MONDAY HIGHLIGHTS

* Secretary-General denounces terrorist bombing in Israel as "heinous act of cowardice"; says international community must not tolerate undermining of peace process.

* Israel says peace process at dangerous stage; urges Palestinian Authority to take bolder steps against terrorists.

* Secretary-General gravely concerned over bombings by Sudanese Government planes of airfields used by relief agencies.

* Secretary-General arrives in Mexico City.

* New Prosecutor says International Criminal Tribunals are milestone in history of criminal and international humanitarian law and step towards more permanent system.

* Elections in Sierra Leone transparent and free, according to international observers; run-off needed because no party receives necessary two-thirds vote.

* Commission on Population and Development concludes twenty-ninth session; calls for international community to accelerate response to Cairo Population Conference.

* * *

Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali was very saddened by the news of another terrorist bombing in Israel this morning, according to a United Nations spokesman. The Secretary-General denounced as a "heinous act of cowardice" the fourth terrorist bombing against innocent civilians in the last 9 days. "The civilized world will not, must not, tolerate these acts of terrorism which have no goal except the undermining of the Middle East peace process".

The senseless carnage must end, the Secretary-General said, appealing for all those who advocated violence to come to their senses. For the third

(more)

For information media—not an official record

time in 9 days, he would send condolences to the Israeli Government and his heart was filled with sadness for the bereaved families, the spokesman added. Yesterday, the Secretary-General expressed shock and outrage over the bombing in Jerusalem.

Meanwhile, Members of the Security Council have condemned the terrorist attacks in Jerusalem on 3 March and in Tel Aviv on 4 March. Council President Legwaila Legwaila (Botswana) told correspondents today, Members extended their sympathy and deepest condolences to the Israeli Government and people, and the families of the victims and wished the wounded a speedy recovery. The vile acts had the clear purpose of trying to undermine the Middle East peace process through terror, they said, and called on the parties to consolidate peace and increase cooperation to curb violence and combat terrorism.

"Our hearts go out to the people of Israel during these trying hours in their history and we hope the peace process will continue and those who want to destroy it will not succeed," Ambassador Legwaila said.

* * *

Israel had declared war against those trying to undermine the Middle East peace process, the country's Permanent Representative Gad Yaacobi, told correspondents today, after briefing the Security Council on the terrorist bombing in Jerusalem this morning. Ambassador Yaacobi said he expected a clear-cut statement from the Council condemning the wave of terrorist bombings, which had killed over 60 Israelis. His country was traumatized and no one could say when or how the peace process would be enhanced, although there was a general feeling it would continue once Israel's security had been ensured, he added.

The Israeli Government was shocked that islamic fundamentalist terrorists, from places partly controlled by the Palestinian Authority, were attempting to kill the peace process, which was at a very dangerous stage. It might be undermined if the activities continued, Ambassador Yaacobi said. He urged the Palestinian Authority to take much bolder steps to save the peace and carry out their commitments and said Israel would do whatever it could to curb the cancer in the region. Measures started yesterday, included closure of the territories, separation of the communities and more aggressive security measures to protect Israelis and enhance the peace process. Iran, one of the main support rs of Hamas and the Islamic jihad, had supplied financial resources, arms, training facilities and political support, but some financing had also come from Europe and groups in the United States, he added.

* * *

The Secretary-General has expressed grave concern over the bombing by Sudanese Government planes of airfields used by relief agencies, according to

a United Nations spokesman. An airstrip in Akuer, southern Sudan was bombed on 17 February, after food had been delivered by United Nations/Operation Lifeline Sudan (OLS) aircraft operating on a flight plan approved by the Sudanese Government. Many people, including women and children were waiting for the food deliveries. Another airstrip was bombed the same day, while an International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) aircraft was on the ground.

The Secretary-General was alarmed that the incidents occurred in an area approved for relief flights by the Sudanese Government, the spokesman said. The disruption of ongoing relief activities was unprecedented in the six-year history of OLS and had serious implications for humanitarian operations which brought relief to over 4 million people in the country. He has asked the Department of Humanitarian Affairs to seek clarification from the Government and assurance such actions will not be repeated.

* * *

On his arrival in Mexico City today, the Secretary-General expressed his gratitude for the Mexican Government's support for United Nations peace initiatives in the region. He recalled that in 1992, two weeks after his election, his first visit as Secretary-General to Mexico was to sign the Chapultepec agreement on El Salvador. It had been a great success for the United Nations because peace prevailed in that country. Mexico had also provided police personnel to help in El Salvador. Now, the Mexican Government was helping United Nations again by hosting the Guatemalan peace negotiations.

* * *

Without justice, including the very personal attribution of blame, which was the landmark of criminal law, cycles of fear, resentment and violence would continue unbroken, according to the new Prosecutor for the International Criminal Tribunals for the Former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, Justice Louise Arbour, who will succeed Justice Richard Goldstone on 1 October. She told correspondents today, the creation of the Tribunals was a milestone and the biggest chapter in the history of criminal and international humanitarian law. By providing a realistic mechanism the world community had called on the principles of criminal justice to shape a just and peaceful world.

The Tribunals were also a step towards a more permanent form of international criminal justice, whose exact form and scope would be profoundly consensual, Justice Arbour continued. A sound base to enforce international humanitarian law would call on criminal justice principles and be established with the full scope and independence of an international court. The Tribunals must be allowed to live up to their promise as it had taken a long time to overcome the legal wrangles which had made it impossible to develop such a body. As with most institutions, there would be times when enthusiasm would

vary, but the Tribunals had already produced results, rapidly and forcefully, she added.

The legitimacy of the Tribunals would be judged by the international community, which had established them with clearly defined legal mandates, and by building, in a consensual way, an operation that satisfied jurists and non-jurists worldwide that they worked with decency, fairness and vigor. Their rules of evidence and procedure were a model of fairness for defendants and many countries would do well to enact such rules, including the right to financially aided legal assistance. The structure was in place for cooperation between the Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia and the International Force (IFOR) to enforce the provisions of the Dayton peace accords related to war crimes. However, the primary responsibility for compliance rested with the parties to the peace agreement, she added.

* * *

The elections on 26 February in Sierra Leone were conducted in a transparent manner, according to the Joint International Observer Group. While there were some security problems that hindered the registration of voters and some intimidation by armed elements, the elections were in general free. However, since no party got the required 55 per cent of the vote, a run-off election should be held in two weeks between the parties that received the highest number of ballots.

* * *

The Commission on Population and Development has called for the international community to accelerate its response to the challenges of the Programme of Action adopted by the Conference on Population and Development in Cairo in 1994. The Commission approved texts at the end of its twenty-ninth session on Friday, which emphasize the importance of information, education and communication as a follow-up strategy. It urges the Population Division to highlight efforts by Governments. It also asked the Secretary-General to arrange a liaison between non-governmental organizations and the Population Division to facilitate the dissemination of information. The text will be taken up the Social and Economic Council at its next substantive session.

* *** *